



Early Peoples

Long before the Spanish arrived in San Francisco, coastal lands now within the GGNRA were home to groups of indigenous peoples known as the Miwok and the Ohlone. The Coast Miwok made their home at what is now Horseshoe Cove in Fort Baker and Big Lagoon at Muir Beach. Ohlone tribes lived along the coast from Big Sur to San Francisco, where the Yelamu tribe lived in villages sited at present-day Lands End, Fort Mason, and Crissy Field. The Miwok and the Ohlone ways of life were dependent on the seasons. They migrated between coastal villages in a cycle of seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering.



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, Portrait of Juan Bautista de Anza, GOGA 18014.

This portrait of Juan Bautista de Anza was painted by Fray Orci in 1774. That same year, Anza successfully established an overland route from Arizona to Monterey that would supply California missions and presidios, and encourage the Spanish and Mexican colonization necessary to secure the San Francisco harbor for Spain.

The Coast Miwok were the first to encounter Europeans when ships from the Sir Francis Drake Expedition anchored near the San Francisco Bay in 1759. As recorded by the expedition chaplain, Francis Fletcher, they showed themselves to be “tractable and loving,” and he felt the open Miwok disposition promised to manifest a “most willing obedience” to the “preaching of the Gospel.”



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, PAM Photo Collection, GOGA 35256

Coast Miwok and Ohlone women collected tule and willow plants for supplies, as well as nuts, greens, and shellfish from tidal zones for food. Men hunted and fished using the method of retreat and lure, for which they fashioned traps and nets to catch abundant fish and game.

English and Russian exploration compelled Spain to strengthen its control of Alta California. In 1769, Gaspar de Portola led an overland expedition north from Mexico. Near Half Moon Bay, the expedition encountered a friendly Ohlone tribe Portola called the Costanoans, derived from the Spanish word *Costenos* meaning “Coastal People.” Juan Bautista de Anza, on his second expedition from the Southwest, reached the mouth of the Bay in 1776. Already familiar with Spaniards, the Ohlone treated members of the expedition like distinguished guests—paralleling the experience of Drake and Portola.

Lieutenant Jose Joaquin Moraga, of the Anza party, led a group of colonists and missionaries from Monterey to San Francisco, arriving in June of 1776. Moraga founded *El Presidio de San Francisco*, and accompanying missionaries established *La Mision de San Francisco de Asis* (Mission Dolores). Soon the Ohlone and Coast Miwok peoples were either enticed or forced into the mission where they were baptized, given Christian names, and then employed as laborers or skilled workers. This process permanently altered local indigenous cultures, and exposure to European diseases for which they had no immunity brought the Miwok and Ohlone to the brink of extinction.

Today, the GGNRA and the Presidio Trust work with members of the Coast Miwok and the Ohlone to highlight tribal history. At Crissy Field shell mounds were re-created to educate visitors about Ohlone burial practices. An annual reenactment ride led by the non-profit organization Amigos de Anza memorializes the Anza Expedition and the Presidio’s Spanish heritage.



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, PAM Photograph Collection, GOGA-1766

Each year the City of San Francisco celebrates its birthday on the anniversary of the arrival of the second Anza Expedition on June 27, 1776. Seen above are Amigos de Anza riders on the final leg of their journey during the inaugural reenactment ride in 1976.